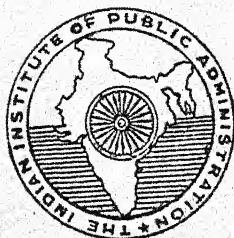


THE UNITED NATIONS & TRAINING FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

LECTURE
DELIVERED ON APRIL 8, 1959

BY
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(Text of the public lecture delivered under the auspices of the Indian Institute of Public Administration on the 8th April, 1959 by Mr. F.J. TICKNER, C.B.E., Deputy Director, Office of Public Administration, United Nations. Shri S. Lall, I.C.S. (retd.), formerly Assistant Secretary-General, United Nations, presided.)

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a very great privilege to be invited to your Institute and to some degree this visit to Delhi is a fulfilment; when I was at Oxford University, I took a research degree on a subject from East-Indian History but until now I have never had an opportunity of visiting India.

Prof. Menon has asked me to talk to you about the United Nations' interest, if I can so put it, in the development of training in Public Administration, and in so doing let me, first of all, make a few introductory remarks about the interest of the United Nations in Public Administration in general. In the United Nations, Public Administration has tended always to be associated closely with technical assistance because the technical assistance programme is primarily concerned with the economic and social development programmes in the countries to which we give aid. At the very early stage, it was found that the success of economic and social development programmes was impossible without the support of a good administration.

The Technical Assistance Administration was set up about the year 1950 and in 1951, a Special Committee of

international experts in public administration produced our first book—our first text-book—on the subject. This is the report entitled 'Standards and Techniques of Public Administration'. So far as technical assistance was concerned, they had to work very much in the dark because at that time we had not yet given technical aid in Public Administration to any country. But it remains a standard book on the subject and it is still in demand, although we are actively engaged in revising it in the light of our experience over the past nine or ten years.

During the year 1951, a Division was formed in the Technical Assistance Administration, which was given the title of the Public Administration Division. It took a little while for us to settle down but we were fully established, I would say, by the middle of 1952. Mr. S.B. Bapat, in whom I have found a good friend and colleague, is now head of that Division. Recently, there has been a slight change in emphasis. The Technical Assistance Administration as such has disappeared and has become an executive unit in the larger Department of Economic and Social Affairs. This, of course, emphasises the close relationship between economic and social affairs and technical assistance, and the Public Administration Division itself has also moved into the same Department.

As time has gone on, we have gradually built up intimate associations with the so-called Specialised Agencies, UNESCO, ILO, FAO and so on; this we welcome because part of our working philosophy is that Public Administration is not a subject in isolation. It can find expression only as fiscal administration, agricultural administration, personnel administration and so on. It is like one of those chemical elements, if there is such a one, which can only exist when it is compounded with another element. Therefore, we emphasise always the service which we can do to our colleagues in these other fields of development.

Although, as I have explained, we came into being about the years 1951-52, the General Assembly had interested itself in Public Administration long before then. The

first Resolution of the General Assembly, which has to do with Public Administration, was passed in December 1948. And, if I may, I will read to you in full its most important paragraph, which says :

“The General Assembly recognising the need for international facilities which will provide adequate administrative training for an increasing number of candidates of proved ability, recruited on a wide geographic basis, but mainly from the countries in greatest need of access to the principles, procedures and methods of modern administration, resolves that an International Centre for Training in Public Administration shall be established under the direction of the United Nations.”

In other words, the original concept was for an international college in New York, which would train administrators from countries throughout the world. I think I am now giving away no secrets by saying that I was one of the candidates who aspired to be put in charge of that venture, but I reckon it a fortunate escape for me that the appointment was never made, for in retrospect I think that the project would have ended in disaster. The concept of an international centre is a brilliant idea but I consider that it is premature at the present state of administrative development.

II

As a first experiment an international Seminar on Personnel Administration was organised in New York in 1950 and participants were invited from all over the world, but looking back one can only say that the Seminar was a disappointment. It was a disappointment because the whole group of participants had not sufficient in common; they tended to break into smaller groups, each group consisting of officers from countries with similar personnel problems. It is impossible at the present stage of administrative development to group together people from a wide variety of countries. A world-wide group would not

have a common basis of approach; many public administrations would not be sufficiently similar in tradition and development to give them adequate common material for a training course or a Seminar.

The second experiment made by the United Nations was also a Seminar on personnel work but this time limited to a group of countries in Central America, which have common traditions and a common language. It was a real success and this Seminar, held in El Salvador in 1951, has influenced our thinking as much as the Seminar in New York in 1950 influenced us by reason of its disappointments. We at once turned our attention from the international approach to the regional approach and three projects were the immediate result. They were simultaneous in concept although they did not actually mature simultaneously.

The first was in Brazil where a School of Public Administration was opened in Rio de Janeiro under the auspices of an institution known as the Getulio Vargas Foundation, which takes its name from a former President of Brazil. The Foundation is not itself a governmental organisation but it has the goodwill and to some extent the financial support of the Brazilian Government and it became, so to speak, the agency, associated with the United Nations in the development of this project. In the following year a somewhat similar venture began in Ankara—the Institute of Public Administration for Turkey and the Middle East—where the sponsoring organisation was the University. Our third project, the Advanced School of Public Administration, was established in Central America in 1953. As a matter of fact, the Central American project was developed by an expert, who had been for a year—the first year—in the Brazilian project. These three schemes, grouped together, represent a phase in the development of our programme which I would describe as the regional phase. The international phase, as you see, had never materialised.

Now let us study these three projects a little more in detail. The Brazilian School offers three courses. It

offers a degree course, lasting four years, as preliminary training for young men and young women who wish to enter the public service. It offers an advanced course for administrators already in service; three years' practical experience is necessary before candidates may enter for this course, which lasts for two years. Finally, there is a special course, which is really a short, intensive course in administrative techniques. The special course is given twice a year and lasts for $4\frac{1}{2}$ months. The United Nations assistance and the regional features of the programme have been concentrated on this special course and the original technical assistance agreement made between the United Nations and the Brazilian Government set a pattern for our technical aid in this kind of project. The United Nations at first supplied five members of the teaching faculty but during the course of the next five years the number was gradually reduced until finally only two remained for the last year. During the same period, the United Nations offered fellowships for Brazilians to travel abroad to study in order to take the place of the United Nations experts as teachers at the School. Although students came predominantly from Brazil, they were invited from elsewhere in Latin America. By the time the United Nations contract ran out at the end of 1956, students had attended from every state in Brazil and from every Latin American country without exception.

The second project I mentioned was in Turkey. This had an extremely elaborate exploratory period, quite the most elaborate planning operation which we have ever undertaken. A working party was set up in Ankara consisting of five Turks and four international experts. I was myself one of the international experts. My colleagues were from France, the Netherlands and the United States. We spent three months in Ankara preparing a scheme for this Institute of Public Administration and we submitted a report which I now think suffered from the inclusion of far too much detail. We worked far too hard and we tried to settle matters of which none of us had any experience in an international context; the Brazilian project has not yet reached the stage at which we could draw any lessons from

its experience. However, we made the report and early in 1953 the project opened. There is only one course at the Ankara Institute. It consists of one month's orientation, five months' study of a somewhat theoretical character and two months' group study in applied administration in Ministries willing to offer such facilities. In Turkey, there was at first a good deal of difficulty in applying techniques from other countries because the administration of Turkey was very dissimilar from the administration of the countries from which the international experts came. On the other hand, the Ankara project has always had the strong asset that in the University framework there was a ready acceptance of a research programme. The project has now reached a stage where it has moved away from the University. On the 1st March, 1959, it was given full legal status as an independent organisation, dependent upon the Prime Minister's office. It was conceived as a regional project but in fact this has not been its strongest feature; the language difficulty has been a very serious one. None the less students have attended from seven other countries.

Our third regional project, the Senior School in Central America, is quite a different story. This is not located specifically to any one country. It is based on an international agreement between the five republics of Central America. It is located in Costa Rica because the Government of Costa Rica offered the premises but each of the five governments of Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador contributes to a fund for the administration of the School. It has a "General Board" as its governing body; this consists of a Minister from each of the five countries. The Director is appointed by the United Nations. The general course of study is very exacting and it has been strictly limited to senior officials. For a preliminary period of six months the students are expected to undertake reading prescribed by the School and to ascertain certain facts about the administration of their own country so that they will be well informed in comparative work at the School. Then they come to the School for a period of five months where the instruction is for the most

part by discussion in small groups and then for the following six months students remain in correspondence with the School, reporting on how far they are able to use the lessons which they have learned. At least once in this final period of six months, and if possible twice, they are visited by members of the teaching staff in their own countries. From the start the School has also run in the second half of the year a specialised course in addition to the general course. For example, in co-operation with UNESCO, courses have been run on the administration of education; the students were officers from the Education Ministry in each of the countries. The tendency in future will be towards more of these specialised courses and towards short seminars in particular phases of administration.

III

So much for our regional experience. Now, let us turn to the problems of training in individual countries. We have given assistance to Argentina, Burma, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Israel, Libya and Nepal. To that list may now be added the Sudan where we are just undertaking a new project and we have also been called upon in an advisory capacity in Yugoslavia. I do not think it is possible for me to describe to you each of these many national projects. I therefore propose to discuss, as far as I can, the general problems which face any Government which proposes with United Nations assistance to set up some sort of national training scheme in Public Administration.

The main difficulty in such a situation is to find some way in which available teaching experience may be used as the basis for the new training in public administration. The normal method in the U.S. Technical Assistance operation is to work through a University, using a local University as the focal point for the training and associating an American University with that local University by means of a contract. This was first done in the Philippines at about the same time as our work began in Brazil but, as the people in charge of that project very soon found, there are phases of

training in a civil service which are outside the normal field of a University. For this reason, we in the United Nations have never favoured the university type of project although we did go into that field in Ankara.

The University may be well-equipped to train people to enter the civil service, but it is usually not well-equipped for in-service training, for the training of people who are actively engaged in the civil service. Nor is it equipped for the training of senior administrators—usually known in the British context as Staff College training and in the United States context as the executive development. I do not wish to underestimate the value of the University but we have found in practice that in-service training is better done within the civil service. Staff College training and senior executive training are equally foreign to the work of the University, although some of the American Universities have developed some very good programmes of this kind recently in the training of their home staff.

I do not think I need in India stress the importance of training the future administrator. I think you accept it as part of your normal administrative beliefs and ideas. We may, therefore, assume that if people are to be trained for the Government service, the Government itself is going to have a very important say in the development of such training. In any government training scheme the students must be taught those things which they can, with best advantage, put into practice when they take up duty. In France, the Government so fully holds this belief that it has set up a National School of Administration which is giving a period of as long as two and a half years for the training of future administrators. In Yugoslavia, a number of Public Administration Schools have recently been established where attendance even for senior administrators is full-time for two years, although this is perhaps a longer period than most countries, which are under stresses of economic and social development or are going through the growing pains of recently acquired independence, are usually willing to afford.

I think that one has also to face the fact that in the developing countries there is a need for training of men

and at the same time a need for a review of methods. For example, the transformation of some of the Latin American countries from comparatively non-industrial communities to industrial societies creates fields of administration which did not exist in the past. The transition from dependent to independent status also creates pressing problems. For example, the newly independent country immediately requires a diplomatic service, its external affairs having previously been taken care of by another country. Therefore, these countries have problems not only of training but of establishing new ministries and new methods.

In this connection, we must remember that public administration cannot be imported and exported. No country can take over the public administration of another. Although it can borrow here and there, it has ultimately no alternative but to evolve its own administration. The administration of India, I think, is different from the administration of Burma, though, at one time, both were within the same administrative framework. The administration of Turkey is very different from the administration of Egypt, though at one time both were in the same political unity, the Turkish Empire.

Once a country has decided that it needs technical aid to develop its public administration, we may assume it that it recognises primarily a need for improvement in men and in methods, not for the creation of a new administration. The situation may call for an improvement in methods before training can begin, or for an immediate start on training because skilled administrators are so few. Sometimes at the outset a public administration project begins solely as a matter of training because the need for training seems so overwhelming, but very soon it becomes clear that the country also needs some review of its administrative practices. One of our projects—the Imperial Ethiopian Institute of Public Administration—began primarily as a training project but its teaching staff almost immediately began investigation and research. In Egypt, the Institute of Public Administration in Cairo was originally set up primarily as a training project for administrators at the middle levels. It has

gradually developed its programme until its latest activity—high-level seminars for operating staff—are essentially a search for administrative improvement, with the training of individuals concerned as an important secondary objective.

Where there is already a good administrative machinery available, it is clearly better to concentrate on in-service training so as to use the experience and traditions which have already been developed, as has happened in India, in Israel and in Burma. In Israel, the University offers general administration studies at the Caplan School of Social Sciences, but the Civil Service Commission has accepted responsibility both for organisational methods and training. In Burma, much the same thing has happened, both organisation and training are the responsibility of a Department of Public Administration in the Prime Minister's office.

A different approach has been followed in some of the South American countries. In Columbia and Venezuela, for example, the Government has set up a Commission of Reform to deal with problems of reorganisation and improved methods, and out of that Commission's work is gradually developing a training programme to teach the improved methods which the Commission is advocating. In Columbia, a National School of Administration has now been established for this purpose.

IV

To summarise the United Nations' experience, I would suggest that my talk has been tending to four conclusions. First of all, I think, except in rare and special instances, an improvement in methods must come before an improvement of men, otherwise the training is wasteful. Therefore, an instrument to secure this improvement in methods is a first necessity; a training programme comes second, but a very close second. Secondly, I suggest that training through Universities is not necessarily the best solution because of the unsuitability of the University for in-service and staff college training. But, at the same time, for the education of future administrator, the University has a very important

role to play. Thirdly, I suggest that, given the support of the government, an Institute of Public Administration can be effective either as a focal point of interest, as a centre of training or as a means of securing administrative improvement. And fourthly, I would suggest that there is an overriding need for the government to express its interest in some tangible way, such as the setting up of a Commission of Reform for the Civil Service, a Civil Service Commission or a Department of the Civil Service concerning itself with administrative improvement.

I have also been asked—perhaps because some of you know that I recently wrote an article on the subject—to say a few words about comparative administration. Personally, I take the view that in the realm of public administration it is impossible to deduce, by comparison, ideal rules of administration. For administrators the golden rule is that there are no golden rules. The ideal type of administration for any country is the administration which best fits in with its history, its politics, and the manners and customs of its people. I remember once at a Seminar in Montevideo on Personnel Administration in the Latin American countries, the Chairman, who was Dean of the Law School of Montevideo, said to me, ‘You know, we have talked a great deal over the last two weeks. But, I think, each of our countries is going to find a solution to its administrative problems in terms of its own folk-lore.’ I think that is a very profound remark. Every country has to find its own solution to its administrative problems. All the United Nations can offer is to help it in that direction. Therefore, the expert who tries to push his own country’s methods is sure to fail.

Some people ask what contribution has the United Nations made to the study of comparative administration apart from taking cognizance of the broad differences in administrative set-up and economic conditions of both ‘underdeveloped’ and ‘advanced’ countries. It seems to me that we can only study particular institutions or problems in the hope that by comparing the different solutions of different countries to the same problem, we can in turn help

others towards their own solutions. It is of very little value to us to compare the administration of one country as a whole with the administration of another country as a whole. In so doing we merely place two pictures side by side and in technical assistance at any rate the canvas will be too broad to be directly useful. In the United Nations we approach these problems on a narrower front in the hope of penetrating in greater depth. We found, for example, that our friends in the Social Welfare department who were interested in community development were running into trouble over the administrative problems of community development. So, we made a study of these problems. It took us over a year and our draft report was studied by an international group of experts who met at The Hague early in 1959. It has since been published. We followed this by a study of all the projects in which we had given advice on governmental organisation and again through the mechanism of a report criticised by an international expert group, we hope to publish a report on organisation and methods as a means to administrative improvement. Our next studies will take us into the realm of personnel administration, which will always be of supreme interest in the newly developing countries for every administration is only as good and as successful as the men and women who are its administrators.

